

Why Gender Matters in Collective Action for Agricultural Innovation



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Roots, Tubers
and Bananas

Collectively organising to roll-out and upscale innovations can only empower women if collectives are not male biased

A potato post-harvest project implemented by the International Potato Center in collaboration with the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) in Eastern Uganda to introduce ambient stores for storing ware potato under ambient conditions was rolled out through farmer and trader associations. Evidence from the associations demonstrated that women were underrepresented in leadership positions and almost non-existent in storage management committees of the four associations.

Women expressed concern that if only men hold leadership positions in the management of the store women may not be able to benefit from and to fully utilize the stores. For example they noted that training targeted group leaders who were often men. Women insisted that for them to benefit from the stores, there should be gender balance in the people selected to manage the store. And although women had expressed the will to be active in store management, personnel from an NGO who facilitated the process of selecting store management committees revealed that most women refused to occupy these positions when elected. Some of the reasons women used to explain why they refused to occupy leadership positions included lack of time to commit for such duties, fear that their husbands would not allow them, meetings times may not be conducive for women and some women regarded their illiteracy as a limiting factor.

While recognising the need to have women represented in the group management committees, women also mentioned the risk of women being given token positions where they are not involved in decision making stating for instance that women could be designated deputy or committee member positions which did not have much influence in terms of decision making. Some associations noted that since men had been the original members of the associations they dominated positions and it was difficult for women to break into top leadership.



Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Collective Action for Agricultural Innovation

Organizing Farmer Groups or Associations to Improve Postharvest Storage or Access to Markets

- Training should not only be focused on group leaders since these are often men. Women opinion leaders in a community may also be recruited for training and evaluation of new technology even if they are not group leaders to ensure that women's experiences and voices are heard and reflected.
- Extension officers can encourage inclusion of women in newly formed groups to ensure women's access to information if this is passed through groups.
- Address constraints women face to take up leadership positions: working in teams, women friendly working times and sensitization of husbands.
- Organize leadership, commercial and financial training for women and men.
- Organize only women spaces to empower voices of women in male dominated organizations.



Gender Responsive Collective Action



Gender Responsive Collectives:

- 1 Develop empowerment frameworks for groups/collectives to ensure that they are responsive to the interests of women and youth members.
- 2 Integrate or emphasise equitable intra-household gender relations during training.
- 3 Encourage men and women in groups/collectives to reflect on the basis of women disempowerment and the cost of such disempowerment not only to women but also to family's agricultural enterprises.